

A photograph of a man in a white shirt and a patterned shawl, focused on writing on a clipboard. In the background, two children are visible, one in a red garment and another in a blue and white striped shirt. The image is framed with a torn paper effect.

# Research and Training for Health and Development

## Institutional capacity statement

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Research and Training for Health and Development (RTHD) is a registered South African public health and development research consultancy that provides research services to NGOs, government departments, UN Agencies and other organisations that are working for better health outcomes in Africa ([www.rthd.co.za](http://www.rthd.co.za)). Our institutional goal is to be a research and training institute of excellence in health and development in Africa. We work toward achieving this by conducting high quality research, and evaluation and training that responds to identified public health needs and priorities. While our work focuses on the Southern and Eastern African regions, we work throughout the continent.

### A brief history

RTHD was set up in 2017 by Dr Renay Weiner and Dr Michael Jana who identified a need for high quality, locally generated research which could inform the design and evaluation of public health programmes. With substantial combined experience in applied public health and development research, RTHD has since successfully completed a range of assignments that address key issues facing African countries. These include HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive health, food and nutrition and TB.



# Our expertise and services

RTHD offers technical excellence and research expertise in delivering high quality research and evaluation. The team has extensive experience in conducting qualitative and quantitative research and evaluation, including for social and behaviour change communication (SBCC).

## We have experience in the following methodological approaches:

- policy and literature reviews
- situational analyses
- key informant interviews
- in-depth interviews
- focus group discussions
- participatory methods, including photovoice
- qualitative data analysis
- quantitative data analysis from existing surveys and primary data collection
- survey questionnaires
- report writing
- presentations
- policy briefs
- monitoring and evaluation frameworks and plans
- monitoring tools development
- programme evaluations, including process evaluations

## Our thematic areas of expertise span the areas of:

- HIV and AIDS
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Maternal health
- Adolescent health
- Nutrition and food security
- Tuberculosis

## In recent times we have responded to COVID-19 in our work by:

- developing on-line monitoring and evaluation approaches;
- providing technical advisory support to a household service utilisation study, following the first wave of COVID-19 in South Africa;
- mapping how HIV and TB programmes have integrated COVID-19 into their programming; and
- delivering a webinar on the impact of COVID-19 on health systems for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) .

**Through our long-term affiliations with the Wits School of Public Health, we also have substantial experience in teaching and training.**





## Our areas of focus



### Social and behaviour change communication

RTHD has conducted a multi-country situational analysis, including formative research, to inform the Let's Talk EUP campaign which has been implemented by UNESCO, UNFPA, Save the Children and SAfAIDS in both Eastern and Southern Africa. We have subsequently developed a monitoring and evaluation framework, and successfully completed a mid-term review and endline evaluation of the campaign.

In partnership with UNICEF, we have developed an evidence based SBCC strategy for the South African Nutrition and Food Security Plan. Other formative research for SBCC includes audience reception evaluations of the Grow Great Zero Stunting

multi-media campaign and the Messages4Mothers campaign (ongoing). RTHD also conducted an external process evaluation for the Soul City Institute's Soul Buddyz programme. In addition, we offered technical research support to the development of a SBCC strategy for the National Strategic Plan for HIV, TB and Malaria.

We are currently developing an SBCC strategy for the prevention and control of obesity in South Africa. This work is done in partnership with Wits Health Consortium and on behalf of National Department of Health.

RTHD staff have substantial SBCC teaching experience through academic positions at the Wits School of Public Health SBCC Division; through participation in the Health Communication for Life capacity building programme in Malawi; and through previous membership of the teaching team for UNICEF C4D training.

### Sexual and reproductive health and rights, and maternal health

To inform the second phase of the African Programme for the Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights programme of Save the Children Sweden, we have conducted case studies of change, as well as a gap assessment. Through key informant interviews, substantial consultation was done with stakeholders such as religious organisations, health services and regional policy bodies. To inform programme strengthening in South Africa, we completed a situational analysis, organisational mapping and capacity assessment of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Our work with UNESCO has included secondary data analysis of key SRHR indicators from national databases in Eastern and Southern Africa, as well as a document review. In 2022 we completed the end-line evaluation of the Let's Talk! Pregnancy at the Right Time campaign which has been implemented in the Eastern and Southern African region by UNESCO, UNFPA, SAfAIDS and Save the Children. In partnership with the International Planned Parenthood Federation we conducted formative research into the young male and stakeholder involvement in family planning in Malawi, Burundi, and South Sudan. We have worked at a global level with Plan International's SRHR section to conduct a desk review of promising practices for addressing adolescent pregnancy and young parenthood (APYP). This informed the development of a programme model for APYP to guide Plan's work in this area.

In partnership with the International Planned Parenthood Federation we conducted formative research into the young male and stakeholder involvement in family planning in Malawi, Burundi, and South Sudan. We have worked at a global level with Plan International's SRHR section to conduct a desk review of promising practices for addressing adolescent pregnancy and young parenthood (APYP). This informed the development of a programme model for APYP to guide Plan's work in this area.

RTHD is leading the external impact evaluation of the MomConnect programme of the South African National Department of Health. This is a mobile phone intervention aimed at providing information and support to pregnant and new mothers. We have experience in developing quality standards for hypertension in pregnancy through our collaboration with PRICELESS SA and the provincial maternal health programme.





### Sustainable Development Goals for Health

As part of the Sustainable Development Goals Health and Wellbeing Consortium led by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, RTHD led the qualitative baseline assessment of health and well-being priorities at Anglo American mine host communities in South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Subsequently we conducted organisational mapping and developed localised community health strategies at Anglo American mines in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

### Food Security

In partnership with JET and NIRAS, we have reviewed the Malawi National Agriculture Policy and related policies. The policy review has informed a project called Support to Parliament and Media to Strengthen Governance in Agriculture and related sectors (SPMSGAg), funded by the EU.

### HIV and AIDS

RTHD has provided research consultancy services to UNAIDS on HIV prevention cascades; progress toward the 90:90:90 targets in Southern African countries; and an ongoing review of youth-led HIV initiatives on the continent. We have also conducted an in-depth mapping of HIV and TB programmes in South Africa, with a focus on those implemented in districts where mining host communities are located. As indicated above, we evaluated the Global Fund supported Soul Buddyz HIV prevention initiative, which is an extra-curricular programme aimed at 10-14 year olds.







## Contacts

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## Our partnerships

**Recognising their importance, we have established partnerships for selected projects with the following public health and research organisations:**

- School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- Ayango Consulting
- Genesis Analytics Health Practice
- PRICELESS, SA
- Joint Education Trust (JET)
- Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Zimbabwe

## Our staff capacity

Collectively, our senior staff have post-graduate training in Public Health, Epidemiology, Development Studies and Human Rights. We apply this multi-sectoral expertise to rigorously address key social and health challenges in the region. In addition to our core team, we have a strong network of regional researchers and public health practitioners who have skills in data analytics, SBCC, migration studies, health systems, social media and health economics. This network is complemented by editorial and graphic design professionals who assist with finalising our products. We also welcome new Masters graduates in the field of public health, development, social sciences, demography and epidemiology. For management and operations we contract a finance and contracts officer, administrator and logistics co-ordinator. Our larger projects are managed by a dedicated project manager.

## Our organisational approach

Our primary goal is to contribute high quality research that will strengthen public health and development programmes and policies in Africa. We therefore seek to ensure cost recovery and sustainability in our organisational planning and budgeting. Since we value both rigour and efficiency, we contain our overhead costs through low cost office rental, flexible work options (place and time), as well as sub-contracting arrangements that are output based. The services of an accountant ensures sound financial management, including producing our annual financial statements.